

# PERSPECTIVES

*Lenten Devotional*



*RUMC 2019*

# LENTEN PERSPECTIVES

In the early church, Lent was a time when new believers prepared for baptism by prayer, study, and fasting. Today, it still serves as a time for renewal and reflection. As you journey through Lent this year, this collection of meditations is offered to you. We hope it will help you go deeper in your faith as you explore and listen for how God is at work in your life and the world. It is the work of our adults, our staff, our children, our students and our pastors. Each writing offers a different perspective on scripture while inviting you to reflect on your own perspective. Our prayer is that you will find these writings helpful throughout the coming weeks. We also hope you will join us for Lenten opportunities for worship, service, prayer, and observance. There is a listing of worship opportunities printed on the following page, and the full calendar of the season's events will be available on the church's website [rumc.com](http://rumc.com). You can also contact me at [mmobley@rumc.com](mailto:mmobley@rumc.com). I will be happy to help connect you with groups, opportunities, and people. May your days be holy and blessed!

In Christ's Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rev. Melissa Mobley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rev. Melissa Mobley  
Associate Pastor

# LENT SCHEDULE

## **March 6 Ash Wednesday**

*Services with imposition of ashes and communion*

12:00 p.m. Chapel

7:00 p.m. Chapel

## **Tuesdays, March 19 – April 16 Lenten Lunches**

*Join us each week from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. in the RUMC dining room for lunch and devotion.*

Led by Rev. Jeff Ross

## **April 14 Palm Sunday Services**

9:30 Contemporary - Sanctuary

11:00 Traditional - Sanctuary

11:00 Modern - Chapel

4:00 – 6:00 Lenten Adventures - Fellowship Hall

## **April 18 Maundy Thursday**

*Drop-In Communion in the Chapel*

7:00 – 9:00 a.m.

4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

## **April 19 Good Friday Services**

12:00 p.m. Youth-led service - Chapel

7:30 p.m. Seven Last Words service - Sanctuary

## **April 21 Easter Sunday Worship Services**

6:30 a.m. Sunrise - Chapel - Rev. Melissa Mobley

9 a.m. Service - Sanctuary - Rev. Tom Davis

10 a.m. Service - Chapel - Rev. Joe McKechnie

11 a.m. Service - Sanctuary - Rev. Tom Davis

## **Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21**

When?

If you are ever looking for something that you know Jesus said, but you don't know where it is in the Bible, look in Matthew chapter 5, chapter 6, or chapter 7. This is traditionally known as The Sermon on the Mount. This is probably a collection of sermons, rather than just one sermon, and it is packed with some of the most well known teachings of Jesus. In the very center of these teachings is The Lord's Prayer. Today's reading is set on either side of The Lord's Prayer.

Why?

Do we really need a warning to refrain from blowing trumpets, obnoxious public prayer, and skipping showers while we are skipping meals?

I think His message is probably in the word "when." Jesus is expressing a major assumption in these verses. Jesus assumes that anyone interested in connecting with God is practicing certain actions. He says, "When... you give..." "When...you pray..." "When you fast..." Jesus assumes that anyone interested in connecting with God is already giving, praying, and fasting. He doesn't say, "You might want to start giving, praying, and fasting if you want to connect to God." Or "think about giving sometime. It feels good." Giving, praying and fasting are assumed, and they are key to a relationship with God. Jesus is telling us the action is not effective by itself. We have to put our hearts into the action in order to connect to God.

On this Lenten journey, I want to invite you to use this devotional to "put your heart into it." Give, pray, and fast during the coming days because God speaks to those who have the heart to listen.

God Bless,

Tom

Dr. Tom Davis





## **John 12:27-36**

### Embracing the Passionate Light of Jesus Christ

Jesus knew with a “troubled heart” that before “he would be lifted to heaven to sit at the right hand of God,” He would be crucified on the cross dying for our sins. “The voice coming from the heavens sounded like thunder” as God explained that his name had been glorified and would be glorified again. Jesus said, “Believe in the light while you have the light, so that you may become children of the light.”

Do you walk in the light? Does the light magnify your heart to such a swelling point of passion that you seek it more and more each day, searching for the pulsating rhythm that makes you want to lift your hands in worship, standing on your tiptoes, reaching and hoping for one more glance of something absolutely beautiful, and guiding you in areas of service meant for you? Or is your heart filled with darkness, forbidding with dread and hopelessness? When Jesus enters your heart, darkness and hopelessness are banished because Jesus takes over, igniting your heart to a listening heart. The light is explosive, sending chills through your being as you begin a new life so vibrant and wondrous; not because of fame, wealth, beauty, sickness or tragedy; but because the light embraces you, molds you on your journey from the top of the mountain to the rivers and valleys below. My journey was filled with tragedy at a very young age but somewhere inside of my heart, there was the light of the one—the Christ significantly promising hope because Jesus Christ was there at the beginning; the eternal beacon and the barrier of my fate—Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.”

Kathy Carpenter

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# Psalm 91

Growing up my family spent much time tent camping. I really wanted a camper instead. Campers seemed more secure, especially when summer storms came. I felt so strongly about this that one day during a particularly strong storm, I ran out of the tent not trusting its shelter. As a result, I found myself caught amid bending trees and popping lightening. I was terrified! I longed to be back in the shelter I so easily abandoned.

The speaker in Psalm 91 understood the importance of shelter and confessed trust in God as the source of shelter. The psalmist believed God would deliver, cover, and guard in times of trouble. Of course, I imagine he realized the value of shelter because, at some point, he had wandered. This is often how it goes—we recognize the value of something after we've chosen something else. Scripture is full of stories of people who wander and then come back to God. Like wandering from a tent's safety into the storm, do we ever wander from God's shelter?

Lent is an opportunity to reflect on our wandering and to reconnect to the source of our shelter. Our stories of wandering offer us a chance to look back and see where God was at work. This helps us recognize our desperate need for God and the shelter we know in Jesus. Perhaps today is a good time to think about your wanderings as well as times you experienced sheltering love. What did each teach you and where do you find yourself in this season of Lent?

Melissa Mobley

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## **Genesis 32:10-11, 22-32**

One of the things I love about God’s story is how He chooses to work through the most unlikely people. I believe He does this to show us precisely how merciful and wonderful He is, and to show us that it’s got nothing to do with how successful, wealthy, or holy we are.

Names like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob may bring forth images of the “great heroes of the Bible,” But a closer look reveals that each of their lives are littered with times of distrusting God, selfish ambition, lies, and deception. Upon reading Jacob’s plot to steal his brother’s rightful blessing as the firstborn, I almost can’t believe that this is the “hero” God is going to use.

But in the passage leading up to his “royal rumble” (hey, he was wrestling the King of Kings...) we see something different in Jacob. He humbles himself and prays for the Lord to save him (vv. 10-11). That night, Jacob experiences one of the most wonderful encounters life can offer: a face-to-face experience with the God of the universe. In the midst of Jacob’s encounter with God, Jacob receives a new name, a new identity, and is blessed.

I’ve been blessed many times in my life to have experienced times where it really felt like God was alive and with me, in a very real way—although I can’t say it’s been as physical as a dislocated hip, or not yet at least! But each time, I come away with a sense of assurance in my identity as God’s beloved child, whom He has blessed, and with a deeper understanding and humbling appreciation for God’s grace.

What a wonderful gift that He would choose to work through people as flawed as Jacob, and even me. May each of us today have a renewed sense of our inadequacy, and His amazing adequacy to do the miraculous.

Bryan Elder

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# 1 Peter 3:18-22

1 Peter 3:18 describes how Christ suffers and dies on a cross for the unrighteous. Peter can preach this because he lived it. Denying Christ three times, Christ forgave, restored, and honored him as the “rock” of His church. Thus, Peter motivates his readers to love and trust Jesus, who was humble, completely worthy, and self-sacrificing. Peter reminds us that Christ persevered after His death and went beyond the grave to seek and save the souls of people in Hades (prison). In other words, Christ is not limited by time, space or death. He is always speaking, preaching and seeking His children. This scripture was meant to encourage readers to never stop seeking and witnessing for Christ. He encourages readers to persevere during hardship, holding onto Christ, their hope.

Having this before us during Lent, let us examine our motivations and the sources of our hope, for we need hope just as desperately as did 1st century Christians. Is our hope embedded in the idols of our culture, such as money or status or is our hope energized in living a redeemed life, standing steadfast in faith and surrendering to Jesus Christ? Do we have eyes to see God’s extraordinary in the ordinary? Do we expect to hear Him speaking and seeking us always? The answers to these questions are always our choice as God never forces us to do anything. However, He never stops wooing us with a gentle, persistent voice. At the end of the day, I believe, the best way—to live Christ’s hope is to love God first and love our neighbors out of the abundance of His love for us.

Becky Bray

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# Psalm 25:1-10

## I Surrender All

There's an old familiar hymn titled, "I Surrender All" that reflects the words of this verse with the lyrics, "All to Jesus I surrender, all to him I freely give; I will ever love and trust him, in His presence daily live."

Wow. What a beautiful truth for a beautiful season. When we surrender...when we give our lives to Jesus totally and fully...when we trust...we can experience the loving and trusting presence of God.

But we must first give our lives to Him. We must give Him anything and everything that interrupts our relationship with Him. We must give Him our worries, our concerns, our finances, our employment, our family conflicts, our pride, our all.

Think about that and answer this question: what do I need to surrender to Christ today?

And why wouldn't we want to surrender everything to live into His love for us? He created us and knows us better than we know ourselves. And He surely loves us more than we could even imagine. Now is the time to embrace that love by fully surrendering our all to Him and in turn, experiencing the freedom of the cross of Christ.

Let us pray: Loving Lord, thank you for the cross that reminds us that You gave all and in turn, ask that we surrender all to You. Help us to turn towards You this day and experience your loving and trusting presence. In Jesus name, Amen.

Susan Gunter

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## **Mark 8:21-38**

This scripture is hard. It certainly was for the disciples. It was hard to understand (Jesus had to tell them 3 different times and they still didn't get it). It was hard to accept as Peter demonstrated. After all, the disciples and all the other followers of Jesus thought He was the Messiah who was going to get them out from under the oppression of the Romans, the new King. Instead, He was going to die a horrible death. And even though Jesus told them He would be resurrected, they still didn't understand how that was going to help them. Can you imagine how heartbroken they were to hear this news?

But as we have learned, Jesus was on Earth to teach about and give us the gift of salvation and the eternal life to which that leads. And there wasn't anything the disciples could say that would distract Jesus from the mission God sent him to fulfill.

While His words about losing your life to save your life were certainly confusing to the disciples and most others, they do define what each of us must do to follow Him. We must experience a "heart" change. Being a Christian does not mean that we have a paved road to wealth and ease. In fact, many times for most of us, there are many difficulties we will encounter along that road. That's when we need to lean on and into Jesus for the support that only He can give.

Art Walsh

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## **Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18**

I Believe!

Imagine just for a minute you are Abram, soon to be called Abraham... but that's two chapters away. Put yourself in his shoes. You just defeated 5 different kings in one battle and you are in fear of retaliation and the safety of your kingdom. Suddenly, you hear God say, "Don't be afraid. I am your shield." Sure, you may have your doubts. Abram had many. But if I were to hear God say, "Do not be afraid," I just might be inclined to believe Him. Then, we see that God confirms his covenant with Abram by promising him children.

Hold up. Wait a minute.

We've heard that one before. It was 10 years prior when God promised Abram a child when he left Haran. Abram was 75 at the time. Now, 10 years later and still no child. You can see why Abram might have his doubts. You can see why Abram would then question God in verse 2.

God simply reminds Abram of his covenant. Abram doesn't come back with another defensive strategy like he's your 16 year old son trying to convince you why it's a good idea for him to borrow the car. No, the text in verse 6 simply says "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness." He simply believed.

When is the last time you simply believed? You didn't try to come up with a great rebuttal. You didn't manipulate someone into believing your side of the story so it would benefit you. Nope. You simply trusted in God's Word and believed. Many of us have a hard time with that. We have become so skeptical and jaded. We want more proof. We want an insurance policy. But Abram, simply believed.

During this Lenten season, my prayer is that we, in the face of doubt and uncertainty, can be like Abram, rest upon God's faithfulness and simply say, "I Believe!"

Jason Scott



## Psalm 19

Long before I knew where it came from, I regularly heard verse 14 of Psalm 19, “Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” Growing up in the church, my ministers regularly prayed those words before they began to preach the sermon. Sometimes, they asked us to pray the words with them “let the meditations of our hearts....” Since public speaking is not something I do with ease or comfort—when I’ve been tasked with sharing a message with a group—I will very often start the message with that prayer.

While that last verse is very familiar—the verses immediately prior might not be. The Message interprets verses 12 and 13 this way: “God’s Word warns us of danger and directs us to hidden treasure. Otherwise, how will we find our way? Or know when we play the fool? Clean the slate, God, so we can start the day fresh! Keep me from stupid sins, from thinking I can take over your work; then I can start this day sun-washed, scrubbed clean of the grime of sin.”

That admonition, to seek God’s guidance each day, to guard against prideful behavior or thoughts, to ask God to “keep me from stupid sins” is one I’d do well to read (and heed) every morning. I wonder how often our witness for Christ is overpowered by our need to be right, or seen as the smartest one in the room, or “busier than thou”? As we observe Lent this year, I pray that we can all take a few moments each morning to acknowledge that we are prone to “stupid sin,” give thanks for what God has done so we can “start the day sun-washed and scrubbed clean,” and then ask that God direct our hearts, minds, and words so that everyone we encounter feels the love of God.

Lisa Wiley

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## Mark 10:46-52

We have all, at one time or another, pleaded to God in times of desperation or need. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

In this Gospel, we find Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, calling out to Jesus on his way out of Jericho. Jesus, hearing the pleas, calls to Bartimaeus asking, “What do you want me to do for you?” Bartimaeus pleads to recover his sight and Jesus responds, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” Bartimaeus immediately recovers his sight and follows Jesus on the way.

The image of this blind beggar leaving his cloak behind as he approaches Jesus with “blind” faith is powerful! Bartimaeus left his only possession behind knowing that the Messiah would heal him. Bartimaeus could now do anything; he chooses to follow Jesus on the way.

This passage conjures personal contemplations of my own “blind” faith. What is it that I ask of God in times of desperation or need? What am I offering in return for these pleas? What do I need to leave behind to follow Jesus? How can I serve God in today’s world?

God, open my eyes to the world around me and guide me towards my role in it. Amen.

Jacob Crane

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## **Exodus 20:1-17**

### In Favor with God and Man

The Old Testament is the Bible that Jesus read. These scriptures revealed the nature of God and guided Jesus' life and interactions.

During Lent, we look at the humanity of Jesus Christ, His obedience to God, His compassion for others, and all that led to the cross. In Luke 2:52, we read that "Jesus matured in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and with people." Living in favor...here are the basic rules revisited:

1. Make God first in all aspects of your life; place your trust fully in Him.
2. Focus on what is lasting, not the temporal. Recognize that God is beyond limitations that we place on Him.
3. Respect God in your speaking and only speak the truth about Him.
4. Prioritize your time with God above that of your work, ambitions, and pleasures. Renew and refresh your life each week.
5. Respect parents by living honorably. Speak to and treat them kindly, recognizing the authority that God has given them.
6. Respect the dignity and sacredness of every human life by your words and actions.
7. Be faithful to your spouse. Respect the institution of marriage, whether you are married or not.
8. Respect the property of others and rely on God for your needs.
9. Be truthful in all that you say and do. Be honest in your interactions with others.
10. Be satisfied and grateful, even in hard times, for all that God has given.

When we live within these truths, we extend grace and forgiveness to others. We know peace within. May we follow Christ's example of obedience to scripture.

Mary Stokes

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## Romans 8:31-39

If God is for us, who can be against us. Nobody! That really speaks to me. I've known this verse by heart from the first time I ever heard it. I used to live in Trussville, Alabama. I had an amazing church just like this one and loved it. Every Sunday, we would pile everyone in our van and drive to First United Methodist Church of Trussville. I would go to Sunday School, where we would memorize a verse and say it the next week for a piece of candy. Of course, then I was only about 6 years old and didn't completely understand, so all I wanted was the candy. I remember though, one day I heard that verse and loved it. One day, my family decided to move to Georgia. I thought about being closer to family and getting a new house, so I was all in. By then I was about 9 and kind of drifted away from God. We did lots of stuff to get ready for the big move. God really helped me throughout this tough time by reminding me that it was gonna be ok. After we were settled, we started looking for a new church. We tried several churches, but they did not feel like home. Then we tried RUMC, and I knew my life had completely changed forever. I never want to switch again. I was once again reminded that God is with me and can help me through tough times. Every time I hear this verse it reminds me of how my life changed through Roswell United Methodist Church.

Katelyn Calhoun, age 11, 5th grade

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## **Philippians 3:12-21**

“ . . . I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me . . . Only let me live up to what I have already attained.”

I had been a middle school teacher for several years when in the spring of 1997 I had a very clear word from God that I should quit teaching. I knew that clear word also included instructions about what I should be doing instead of teaching. He led me to North Fulton Community Charities (NFCC). God introduced me to those living marginalized lives in my affluent community. He broke my heart when teenage mothers who were my daughter’s age had to ask for food, diapers, help with rent—seventeen years old with a baby and an unstable financial life! There were elderly people needing food and financial help!

Then ten years later He raised up The Drake House and sent me there to again work with single homeless mothers in need of a new start in a marginalized existence. Again, my heart was broken to know that there was such an extreme need in my affluent community.

My Savior, Jesus has taken hold of my life, transformed my narrow worldview by breaking my heart for His hurting children. He keeps opening new opportunities for me to meet my neighbors, to love them as He loves me. I am so thankful for the many neighbors Jesus has put in my life so that through them I can see Him more fully.

Pam Page

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## **Luke 13:1-9**

Jesus was constantly being ambushed by people. In most cases, they weren't interested in listening to him or learning from Him. They were more interested in validating their own ideas about God. In this passage, people are wondering why bad things happen to good people. Random tragedies had happened, and pious people wanted Jesus to validate their arrogant world view.

Popular in Jesus' day was the thought that the poor, the sick, the marginalized were in the shape that they were in because of some sin in their life. It is not unlike a lot of thinking today which believe "those" people should just work harder and their lives wouldn't be so hard. It is hard for privileged people to recognize their privilegedness.

In each situation, Jesus instructs the crowd that the important focus is not on how and when we die, but the condition of our heart at the moment of death. Faithful living is more important than prosperous living. We won't be judged on the value of our assets, but on the sincerity of our faith.

After answering the barrage of questions, Jesus cloaks a question of His own in the parable of the fig tree. The parable is a mixture of grace, forgiveness, second chances, encouragement, and hope. For people who often get it wrong, who make bad choices, and who are prone to mistakes, this is truly GOOD NEWS!

The Gardener is attentive to the needs of the trees. The Gardener is skilled in encouraging growth. The Gardener is patient. The wise person will give the Gardener the freedom to do HIS work and follow HIS advice.

Jeff Ross

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## **Joshua 4:1-7**

Here we find the Israelites in the final chapter of a 40 year trial where they were disobedient to God. WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING? Not trust GOD'S plan? Never. Not me! No way! This passage settles heavy on my heart. It reminds me of a time in my journey as a Christ follower where I've turned from my ever-loving God...and that's hard to admit.

Recently, our family has experienced sadness. The kind of sadness that feels like a heavy wool coat zipped all the way up to the top of your neck that you can't take off...and it is summer; in Georgia. About a year ago my husband's best friend died. His name was Zakh, and Zakh was woven into the fabric of our family. He died quickly, an illness took him in ten days. He was only 38 and we were heartbroken, stunned, and so sad. Hey, believer, what did you do next? You trust God. You lean into God, right? I didn't. I turned away. It was painful and I was angry.

I picture one of my kids yelling, "MOM! HELP ME WITH MY COAT! THE ZIPPER IS STUCK!" A task as a parent that seems to be a daily thing. In my sadness, I was stuck in this heavy coat and instead of yelling out to God for help, I tried to get out of it all on my own. I thought as a Christ follower I was equipped to handle what life threw at my family. I'VE GOT THIS, GOD. I'm equipped! I can unstick this zipper, just hold on! I felt alone, salty, and bitter. But the truth is, even in those ugly emotions, God was and is always with me. In the darkness, the sadness, in the heavy coat. GOD is with us as we grieve and even though we feel unworthy, He's quietly still using us for His good. Grieving and healing along with us, His children. Pretty amazing, right?

Here's what I love about this passage in Joshua. God asks the Israelites to build a memorial of stones. A way to remember their disobedience. What is your memorial? A stone? A coat perhaps? What has God left on your heart to remind you that He is always with you and asking you to trust Him?

Dear God, You are good. Always. Please help me remember to see You in the darkness and to rest in Your promises. Please help me to be not afraid of the unpredictability of life but instead rest in You, lean into You. And, God? Please help me with my coat, I've had it on way too long and I need help with the zipper. Amen.



## **John 2:13-22**

Perspective is a funny thing. It isn't something we think about often but is so critically important to how we live our lives. You see, the perspective in which we see things becomes our actual reality. Two people can go through the exact same experience but can walk away from it having actually experienced totally different things. It all has to do with our perspective. What lens are you seeing the world through?

In John chapter 2, Jesus and His disciples travel to the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast. Every Jewish male from 12 years old were expected to attend Passover in Jerusalem so you can imagine the number of people in the city and the temple courts. As they begin to enter the temple, Jesus immediately becomes filled with righteous anger. Everywhere Jesus looks there are people selling oxen, cattle, doves, and other animals for ritual sacrifice. Then there are those exchanging money from all the travelers. Jesus could not believe His eyes.

Meanwhile, His disciples don't seem to care much about the business taking place in the temple. I mean all these people have traveled hundreds of miles and they have to buy their sacrificial animal somewhere. And the money exchangers, so what? Only official Jewish coin was accepted in the temple so people had to exchange their money.

There it is right there: perspective. Jesus simply had better perspective than His disciples. Yes, people needed animals to sacrifice and money to exchange, but Jesus saw what was really going on. From His perspective, they were taking His Father's house and making it a "den of thieves." This was a holy place of worship not an office park.

There is a song from the early 2000's called "Give Me Your Eyes." The first part of the Chorus goes like this: "Give me your eyes for just one second, Give me your eyes so I can see, Everything that I keep missing, Give me your love for humanity."

I pray the Lord gives us all His eyes so that we can begin to see and love the world from His perspective, not ours.



## Micah 6:6-8

“With what shall I come before the Lord?” In Micah, God indicts the disobedient people of Israel and presents His case against them. In Micah 6:6-7 they question what the Lord requires of them and ask what level of sacrifice will be enough to approach Him. Micah 6:8 provides the answer. God has already shown what is good and what is required: to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with Him.

Jesus proves the perfect example for treating people with justice and mercy and how to be in relationship with God. Jesus tells us to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” (Mark 12:30-31)

Paul says in Eph. 2:8, “For it is by grace you have been saved . . . it is the gift of God.” If God has redeemed us through His gift of grace, how should we approach Him? We should approach in humility and thankfulness, recognizing our dependence on Him and responding obediently in faith.

So, what does the Lord want? He wants us! He wants us to “walk” faithfully with Him throughout life, no matter the circumstances, recognizing His presence in every place we go and everything we do, acknowledging our dependence on Him, listening to His “still small voice” and acting upon it, sharing HIS LOVE with others by treating them with justice and “loving kindness.”

What if we all, His entire creation, could “walk together” with God, doing justice and loving mercy? Heaven on Earth?

Ernie Bond

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## **Psalms 15**

### What Pleases God

During the Lent season we are reminded how Christ showed us His commitment to us.

Psalms 15 shows us what God wants from us.

If we are to please God we need to do what God values.

God values: truth and integrity, to walk blamelessly, to value others by not talking badly or gossiping about them, and to follow through on our promises even when it's inconvenient or uncomfortable for us.

In Acts 13:22b, it states: "...I have found David son of Jesse a man after my (God's) own heart; he will do everything I want him to do."

David wasn't perfect and he says so himself in Psalms 25:11, "For the sake of your name, Lord, forgive my iniquity, though it is great."

He does not expect perfection for us but for us to commit our ways to Him (God).

For those who are committed to doing what pleases God—He also promises that we will "dwell in Your sanctuary" and "live in Your holy hill" (Psalm 15:1).

God also promises that;

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."(Psalm 23:6)

I hope during this Lent season we will renew our commitment to God by doing what pleases Him.

Angie Owen

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## **Ezekiel 37:1-14**

The Hebrew prophet Ezekiel lived over 600 years before Christ. When he was around 30 years old, he was forced to leave his homeland when Nebuchadnezzar exiled the Jews from Judah. It was during this dark and challenging time in his life that he had the Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones.

In his vision, Ezekiel finds himself in a valley of very dry bones—bones so dry that there could be no hope of life. And yet, God challenges him and with His breath the bones rattled, came together and were covered with tendons, flesh and skin. A vast army, God’s people were brought back to life and stood on their feet.

We all encounter difficult times in our lives and challenges with our relationships, our careers, bad habits, and our health. Even when things are going well, we all have at least a few “dry bones” that nag at us and challenge our faith. But God’s promise is that He is with us no matter how hopeless we may feel. It is notable that the vast army did not just instantly come back or vaporize together in a shazam moment. They came back together first with the bones, the foundation of our being which is based on our faith. The bones which are the foundation for tendons, flesh and skin are representative of our faith. Our faith will carry us through the hard times and serves as the foundation for goodness, knowledge, godliness, and love (2 Peter 1).

Adam Hayes

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## **James 2:14-19**

Hello, my name is Kerris Foley, and I am a high school student at Roswell United Methodist Church. When I was asked to write a devotional I was a bit nervous because I'd never written a devotional for so many people, but I was excited. James 2:14-19 says "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, 'Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." I was reading this verse, and it was a lot to take in. I had to read it several times to fully understand and comprehend what it meant. I took some time to look up some simple words that we might overlook in this verse. As defined in the dictionary, "faith" means to have complete trust or confidence in someone or something. Many of us think we are very faithful people but don't honestly understand the true meaning of faith. Putting your complete trust and confidence in Jesus Christ is what makes a person truly faithful. Webster's Dictionary states that the word "deed" is an action that is performed intentionally or consciously. To me this means service or helping others lovingly. So, what does it mean when we are faithful people but don't perform the deeds God calls us to? Can being faithful be enough without serving intentionally or consciously? The verse says, "faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead." I encourage you to let your faith shine through you as you serve. This can be simple acts of kindness or even a major service project that can change your community. Put your complete trust in Him and, if you show your faith through your deeds, the Lord will show you his faith by his deeds.

Kerris Foley, 9th grade

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## **Matthew 19:16-23**

What good thing must I do to get eternal life?

I just want to be saved! Surely money won't hinder me, right? Yet, I read that great wealth caused separation from Jesus for this young, rich man.

Is Jesus asking me to sell all of my possessions, too? But should I not also care for my family? Who will look after me if I have no money and need care in my later years? Does it make sense in Roswell, GA in 2019 to sell everything and give my money away?

This scripture, taken by itself, is a difficult one to understand. Fortunately, Jesus does not leave us sad and confused! The answer lies in Matthew 19:25-26, just past the familiar eye-of-the-needle passage. "When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished and asked, 'Who then can be saved?' Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"

Scripture tells us that God wants no one to perish, so we certainly shouldn't be surprised that God has made a way of salvation for us through Jesus. Our salvation is dependent on our faith in Jesus, not dependent on our goodness or our great deeds. Sounds simple, right? But, not so fast . . . It is quite difficult to acknowledge that we cannot earn our way to heaven and that only Jesus is the way, the Truth, and the Life.

Please pray with me: Dear God, thank you for Jesus and for providing salvation through Him. Please help me to use this Lenten season to reflect on how much your love cost your Son.

Nancy Erwin

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# 1 Timothy 4:9-16

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young . . . I consider that to be the most commonly quoted excerpt from this passage, but there is so much more here. Especially for the believer. This is important to remember as we often lose faith because of feelings of seemingly living in a world with a lack of regard for true discipleship.

But we play a role in that. No, we don't save souls. That part is the work of the Holy Spirit but we have responsibility here. We call ourselves disciples, and as such, we are called to live a holy and righteous life. We are called to remember that if God created it, it is good and to treat it as such. We are even reminded to remember the first time we sensed God's call. We are told not to forget our gift. Our gift! It's not a heavy yoke, it's not a duty, it's not an obligation. It's a gift! We are a blessed, remembered people who are called to carry the Word of God to the nations because He is the Savior of all people!

Easter is the season we remember that Jesus came to save all people. And we are a chosen, loved, cherished people that He loves so much that He was willing to die for us. The good news is after this he was resurrected offering us the promise of eternal life. If we are called to live a life of sharing this knowledge of profound love and devotion, the least we can do is take part in what Christ is doing in the world. Today, I pray that we remember our gift and live a life that is worthy of the example of Christ.

Esther Collins

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## **Jeremiah 18:1-6**

### My Superhero!

“I saw the Potter working at the wheel . . . the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands so the potter formed it into another pot. Like clay in the hand of the potter, so you are in my hand (declared the Lord)” (Excerpts from Jeremiah 18:3-6).

My life has been a story of two completely different people. The first part of my life looked like a “marred pot” as I bounced through life centered on worldly ambitions and controlling interests. I was not remotely interested in Jesus or church membership and was completely unfamiliar with the Bible. The amazing plan Jesus had in mind for me all along was teaching me through difficulties, illness, and loss until He got my attention. He rescued me through Bible Study. And it was swift and totally unexpected. The Holy Spirit miraculously gave me an enthusiastic desire to start Bible Study for the first time in my life. Ever since, the fire of interest has continued to burn for over 25 years. Actually, it’s become a passion.

When the potter carries out His plan and gives you the opportunity to know and love Him and you accept, His Spirit takes over your heart, mind, and spirit. But you must persevere and be faithful to where He leads you! In the second part of my life, the potter has given me a joy and love of the Lord that is beyond understanding! What does that look like? Jesus is my Superhero every moment and every day. I lean on Him for everything! Through the troubles, disappointments and illnesses, He is always with me. What a Superhero forever!

Paulette Ellington

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## **Psalm 1**

Blessed. It's the first word in the book of Psalms. It's a word we use when good things are happening in our lives. A quick Google search reveals hundreds of shirts and coffee mugs with the word 'blessed' across the front. Scroll through any social media platform long enough and you're bound to run into a post with #blessed in the text. But, what does it really mean to be blessed?

To be blessed is to be happy or joyful. But, it's so much more than a feeling. Living a life of blessing comes from a deep sense of joy and contentment. It's a way of living that only comes from being in a right relationship with God. Being rooted in God's Word, really reading and studying it every day, is how we find that relationship.

The Psalmist compares a blessed person to a tree growing near a stream. That tree has a constant supply of life giving water and its roots grow down deep into the soil making it sturdy and strong. Because it's planted near the water, its leaves are always green and it bears fruit season after season. Strong, vibrant and full of fruit—this is a blessed life!

When we choose to follow God's way, we choose a life of blessing. Now, this certainly doesn't mean life will always be perfect. Storms will come. Life will have its ups and downs. But through it all we can stand firm, rooted in the never-changing Word of God.

Jennifer Scott

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## **Luke 19:28-40**

### No Questions Asked

While I do not want to take the focus away from Jesus in this passage, I can't help but notice the work of the disciples in this scene. We aren't told which disciples play a role in this particular passage, but we know that Jesus gave them specific instructions—go find a colt in the village ahead of you, untie it, and bring it to Jesus. Jesus even told them what to say if anyone questioned them. I am particularly drawn to the obedience of the disciples. I wonder if the disciples had a clue about what was soon to take place; Jesus would triumphantly ride into Jerusalem as He sought to usher in the Kingdom of God to a people who were desperate for a Savior. The disciples did not question Jesus when He gave them these instructions. They listened AND obeyed. No questions asked!

I don't know about you, but I wish I was this obedient to Jesus' calling and instructions in my life all of the time. No questions asked. Confession time: my first response isn't always, "Yes, Jesus, I will go where you are sending me and will do what you are calling me to do. No questions asked."

How can we be more attentive to God's voice this Lent and Holy Week? Furthermore, how can we willingly follow God no matter where we are being led and what we are called to do? No questions asked!

Michael Cromwell

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## **Luke 21:34-22:6**

In this text, Jesus is quietly handed over by Judas for his ultimate extinction. These are the final hours leading up to Jesus' death, when those who were "afraid of the people" (those who wanted Him crucified), sought to have Him delivered at a time when "no crowds were present." What a cowardly way to have the King of the universe delivered to them. It speaks volumes of the tone in which the evening had, of the frame of mind that the chief priests were in. They knew that what they were doing would have dire consequences. They knew that they had someone who was not like the other criminals among them. This tells me they were both angry with Jesus, as well as afraid of Him.

How often have we also known something was wrong, unholy, unchristian, or otherwise a displeasure to the Father, and yet we may have done it when we thought others weren't watching? When we thought it was dark, no one would see our innermost, evil intentions that could or would bring harm to another? Or even just to our personal relationship with Him? So now that brings us back to the verses just before this scene. It is these very intentions and evil desires that because Jesus walked the earth as a human, He knew the temptations of evil that are all around us and our proclivity for them. Verse 21:35 says it all—that it will happen to every human being everywhere on earth.

We are not evil because we have evil temptations. We are holy, cherished, and loved and the ultimate sacrifice has been paid to redeem us all. Our Father in Heaven knows what we struggle with each and every day and knows that the evil desires of our heart will show up sometimes. However, we are not without hope. We have been given words of direction, guidance, and love. We have been given redemption that comes through the cross! We can boldly approach the throne and ask for forgiveness, and because He loves us so very much, we will receive mercy and our sins will be thrown as far as the east is from the west. Please don't feel you've gone too far down any road. There is always redemption and forgiveness waiting for you because of the sacrifice that Jesus made. He made it even for you! Take hold of that forgiveness today and walk in the light.

## **Luke 22:14-23**

Whether called Communion, Eucharist, or the Lord's Supper, this scripture lays the groundwork for a Christian rite that has existed as long as the religious tradition itself and has persisted through multiple denominational splits. There is a timeless quality in the simplicity of this act, and the sacrament reinforces the promise that God is still with us. It allows us to reenact the past but commune with God in the present.

Jesus, as son of God, could have requested we honor Him through prayer at an altar or tribute given at a shrine, but Immanuel, God with us, wished to be remembered by taking part in one of the most human actions we participate in: eating. Jesus shared a meal with His apostles in the guest room of someone's house, and we are told He eagerly desired to share this meal. Not because of the five star accommodations, not because the food was prepared by an exquisite chef...He eagerly desired to share this meal with those whom He loved. This love is so encompassing that He even invites the one who would come to betray him a short time later. Jesus invites us, wayward as we are, to dine with Him at that same table. His invite isn't limited to the blameless or the holiest among us. It isn't reserved solely for the rich or the righteous. It is an invitation for all to participate in a simple meal that conveys a simple message: that God's love for us is larger than pain, greater than sorrow, and more powerful than death, and we should remind ourselves of that regularly.

Justin Combs

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## Luke 22:54-62

### A Friend Denied a Friend

I've read this passage many times, but I was recently struck by, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter." Jesus had already foretold Peter's denial, but did it make it any easier for Jesus to hear?

Perhaps you've been in a relationship that you knew probably wouldn't last, or had a friend who was not known for lifelong friendships. Yet you held out hope that with you it would be different. After all, you have so much to offer someone. You gave it your all and then your special someone determined you weren't so special and denied you the relationship. Did it hurt any less because you knew in all likelihood it was going to happen?

I doubt that Jesus' knowledge of Peter's denial made His pain any less. Peter did not get to apologize to Jesus. They did not get to have what we nowadays call "closure."

Jesus knew human pain. When we find ourselves alone due to the loss of a relationship, may we keep in mind that we can take this loss and pain to Jesus. We can vocalize the questions of "Why did this happen?" and "Why doesn't this person want to work this out?" We can pray for Jesus to heal our hearts and find acceptance. As the old hymn says, "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and grieves to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer."

Allison Davis

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## **Luke 23:1-12**

Reading this Scripture over and over, the thing that stands out the most to me is Jesus' reply. "You have said so," Jesus said (Luke 23:3b). I love this response. I wish we could be there to hear Jesus' inflection in His voice. Can you imagine it? "You have said so." Did Jesus say this sarcastically—fed up with this nonsense? Can we rest in Jesus' humanness in this moment? Maybe this is a time for those who don't always connect with the high language of church to connect to our Savior who spoke so plainly with Pilate.

Or did Jesus say it as a way for Pilate to reflect on his own words? How many times did Jesus use this technique of teaching us through our own thoughts and claims? We see this with Peter too, "But what about you?" He asked. "Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:13-20) Jesus continues to teach even at the end. Can you relate to the teacher in Jesus?

One of the greatest things I've learned from my husband as we have explored Scripture together is that we can have different perspectives in our reading. Lent is a time of exploration, of digging into the Scripture, of self-reflection, and of contemplation. Let us rest in the mystery of Scripture and the contemplation of Jesus' reaction. It is through this journey of discovery that we can better connect with our Lord and Savior at this most difficult and thought-provoking time of Holy Week.

Lorin Tate

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## **Luke 23:44-49**

Events surrounding the death of our savior fill us with overwhelming emotion. We imagine what it felt like to be there. We see the emotions of the witnesses declaring Christ's innocence and beating of their chest in anguish. It was a time of bewilderment, fear, and despair. What is most striking is the emotion of God himself. Although God had been planning this day since the creation of time, He was not numb to the price that had to be paid. God's emotion is witnessed in the series of miraculous signs and wonders.

Three hours of darkness gives us a sense of what God felt as He watched His only son suffer on the cross. But more striking are the events that coincide with Jesus' death. Matthew's account gives a detailed description. As Jesus breaths His last—the temple veil is torn completely down the middle, an earthquake shook the land and split rocks, and dead people were raised to life. Those are God sized expressions.

These events reveal two sides of God's emotions. What at that time may have been interpreted as anguish or anger, we see symbolic of victory; an extravagant celebration of the defeat of sin and death. The sacrifice and soon resurrection of Jesus, would make a way to bring God's creation into a personal relationship with Himself. The tearing of the temple veil illustrates it best; A 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide and 4 inches thick curtain - meant to separate us from God's presence, torn in two . . . through Christ, never again would sin separate us from our creator.

Today as we reflect on Christ's crucifixion, let's follow God's example and celebrate!

Bev Bearden

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## Psalm 23

Verse 2-3. “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.”

As the mom of little ones, it’s hard to be by the quiet waters these days. For one, it’s literally never quiet in my house. Except now—at 9:35pm when the kids are in bed, the dishes are done, the laundry folded. That’s the other thing: there’s always so much to do. And not just the chores, but we fill up our calendars with work, playdates, dinner with friends and activities . . . The list could go on. So, it’s hard to be still. But oh, on those glorious Saturday mornings where magically nothing is on the calendar, it restore my soul to lounge in pj’s, actually sit down to drink a cup of coffee, take a walk . . . It’s important to sit by the quiet waters.

“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.”

This psalm is commonly read at funerals. I don’t have a seminary degree, but to me, it’s more about life. I hope goodness and love follows me all the days of my life. For me, I can find the goodness and love every day. Sometimes it’s a grand event, but more often it’s a small thing. The little ones actually eating dinner, a sweet note tucked in my purse from my husband, laughs with my co-workers . . . But in order to find that goodness and love, I must be by the quiet waters to reflect on the day. Otherwise, it will pass it us by in the busyness where we all get wrapped up.

Sit by the quiet waters this Lenten season. I hope it restores your soul and you find the goodness and love that fills your life every single day.

Meghan Walter

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## **John 20:1-18**

As a child, I shared a room with my sister. Her side of the room had windows and mine, paneling straight out of the 1960s. While Beth would slumber off to sleep, I would find myself face to face with a bearded man looking down, from his outline in the paneling. Darkness wasn't my friend.

I'm not sure when it happened, but I began to appreciate the darkness. Growing up in the country, constellations glimmered in the dark. When I lived by a lake, I used to love to canoe in the dark, to see the sunrise on the water. I still love to spend time with a cup of coffee and to be in prayer, as the night fades into morning. In all these settings, I experience God. So, it's no surprise that "while it was still dark" captures me.

"While it was still dark" Mary Magdalene went to the tomb. I can only imagine the weight of her heart. After being faithful, even to the foot of the cross, she was most likely going to see about a proper burial for Jesus. But in the darkness, she realized the stone had been rolled away, so she ran. How often do we run from the darkness in our lives?

I love that in the company of other followers, they went back and faced the darkness together. The Beloved Disciple saw and believed. And Mary encountered angels, and Jesus!

Isn't it incredible to think that amid our darkness, Jesus is with us, whether we recognize Him or not? Like Mary Magdalene, the Spirit moves us to response. To go and tell others that light overcomes darkness. Isn't it awesome to think that the same power that rolled the stone away from Jesus' tomb is available to us? Go and tell the Good News!

Nancy Lane

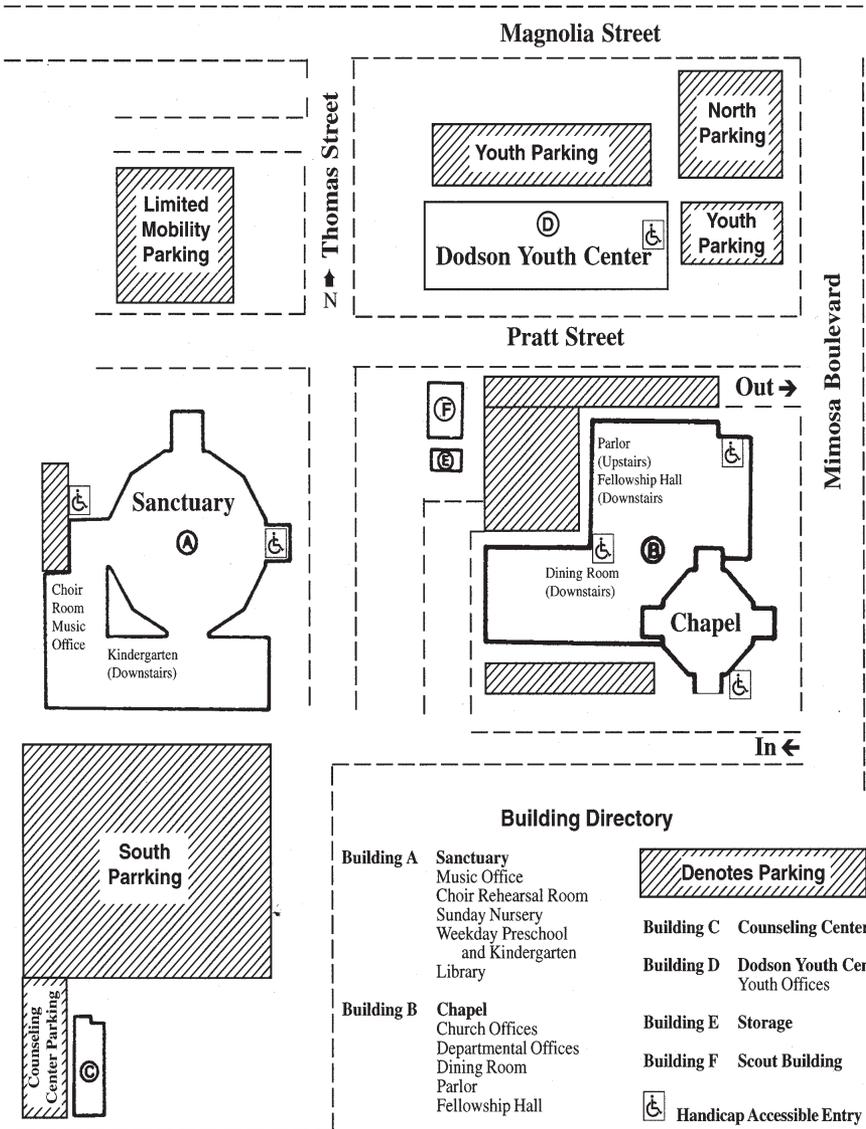
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# Roswell United Methodist Church Campus Map



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